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EDITORIAL

ST PAUL said that Christ crucified, whom he preached, was folly to the Greeks. But even more foolish in their eyes, as the Apostle had discovered at Athens, was Christ risen from the dead. This is more than foolishness, it is fantastical nonsense. And it is probably true that most of us Christians today, with our mentalities so deeply rooted in the rational soil of Greece, find our faith in the resurrection of the dead much harder to make sense of than our faith in the power and wisdom of the cross. There is greatness and nobility about our Lord's death for us, and it evokes a ready religious response from the most indifferent, as is shown by the churches packed on Good Friday. But then hard on the heels of Good Friday comes Easter Day, like a happy ending tacked on to a Greek tragedy; add the doctrine of our own resurrection to that of our Lord's, and you have introduced the childishness of 'they all lived happily ever after'.

If we dared to be honest with ourselves, we would perhaps be tempted to agree with those Corinthians who said that there is no resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. xv). But St Paul made it quite clear where the logic of that idea would lead; 'If the dead do not rise, neither has Christ risen; and if Christ has not risen your faith is vain, you are still in your sins. If our hope in Christ is confined to this life only, then are we of all men the most pitiable.' Without the resurrection, ours as well as our Lord's, the cross has no meaning and no power; nor therefore have mortification, spiritual discipline, moral effort.

The main articles of this number are all ascetical in tone. *Askesis* means training, and training has no meaning unless it is training for something. Likewise there is no point in abandoning yourself to the divine will, or trusting whole-heartedly in divine providence, or turning your back on the world for the desert—unless the dead rise again. That is what we are training for, to be conformed to the glory of Christ's resurrection. We train for it by conforming ourselves first to his death.

We do not forget the cross after Easter, we look back on it with pride. So these ascetical articles are not out of place in this April issue. But neither do we forget the resurrection on Good

Friday. Christianity has often been derided for promising to its devotees pie in the sky. It is an accusation we should not be too hasty to deny. The way our Lord put it was, 'I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly'.



SPIRITUALITY OF THE JUDAEAN DESERT—II:

Mar Saba and St John Damascene

ROLAND POTTER, O.P.

ALL pilgrims and visitors to Jerusalem include Gethsemane, the valley of the Cedron, and the Mount of Olives in their itinerary. This eastern side of Jerusalem is all 'holy place', for as St John tells us, our Lord was often there (cf. John xviii, 1-2). Very few however linger long enough to trace the course of that occasional torrent-bed or *wadi*, which starts as the Cedron and continues down towards the Dead Sea as the Wadi en-Nar. But let us suppose that we have done so and skirted the site of Old Testament Jerusalem, past the pool of Siloam (John ix) on our right. If we continue down the course of the *wadi* by what at best would be called a bridle path, twisting and turning, strewn with boulders, we finally plunge down between high cliffs of sombre and sinister rock. We start south, but a sharp bend serves to make the general direction south-east. After about three miles we have on our right the ancient site of Deir Dôsi, or the Monastery of Theodosius, where John Moschus began his monastic life about A.D. 538, and lived and struggled after perfection, little realizing that his *Pratum Spirituale* was to become centuries later a spiritual classic, throwing much light on those happy centuries of Palestinian monastic life, and at the same time tracing the first lineaments of a style of spiritual writing which is also exemplified in the *Little Flowers* of St Francis.

These are the memories of the Christian past which come to mind as we stumble down the stony path and enter a world of savage loneliness and rocky steppe-land, which constitutes the desert of Juda stretching from the Jerusalem-Hebron hill-ridge down to the western shores of the Dead Sea—now so much better known by the finds of the Dead Sea scrolls at Kh. Qumrân.

After some three hours of difficult walking we come upon the shrine of St Sabas, or Mâr Saba as it is known today, one of the oldest monasteries in the world, only comparable to that of St Catherine on Mount Sinai, and like it still peopled by monks and memories of martyrs and monks extending over long centuries of Christian living and Christian striving. This centre flourished in the desert of Juda for about three centuries, from Constantine to the Arab invasions, and then long after, despite complete turn and turn about of fortunes, a community lived on and even now still lives there. Mâr Saba seems to have been for the most part a regular or cenobite community rather than a *Laura* or grouping of hermits, each of whom lived in solitary grottoes yet sufficiently near to meet on Sundays and feast-days, as was exemplified in the Wadi Kelt further north.

Thus when we venture into the rocky fastnesses, the very existence of Mâr Saba reminds us of a flourishing period in eastern Christendom, when this part of the Church, like a true vine united to its parent stem, gave birth to a host of true penitents, martyrs, saints. Hard, barren, repulsive steppe-land and desert was made supremely fair by the qualities of those who lived happily and intensely there. We realize as we read John Moschus' tales of the struggles of St Jerome, that it was a hard-won happiness born of burning love for Christ, and willingness to be poor and chaste and obedient. We get an impression of essentials sought strongly: to have gone into the desert at all was already heroic. Take St Sabas whose tomb we have reached; this champion of the true faith worked to his dying day (he died at ninety-four), and prayed, and pleaded, and travelled at ninety-two across Asia Minor and back again, to spread the peace and truth of his divine master and to fashion the unity of the great Christian family.

This St Sabas came of a Cappadocian military family. His father at one stage was posted to Alexandria, and left his eight-year-old son with uncles in the home country (the story has a strangely modern sound). Anyway, the child was unhappy. Perhaps he only knew happiness when he took to the religious life at Jerusalem in 457. After various sojourns in various deserts, we find him in 478 in a grotto of the Wadi Cedron. Other hermits gathered round and peopled the neighbouring grottos. The rock formations of the Desert of Juda lent themselves to many caves,

grottos and hollows. Hence the many references to caves in the Bible. Soon a community of hermits of the *Laura* kind came to be, and then a monastery proper or *Cænobium* was built in 486. During the eighth and ninth centuries a number of distinguished writers, poets, doctors and ascetics made it their home. Amongst these were Stephen Thaumaturgos, Cosmas and Stephen the 'melody makers', Antiochus, St John Damascene, and many others. Despite Persian and Arab invasions and massacres, Greek monks held on to the site till the fourteenth century, when Serbs and Bulgars seem to have seized the property; however, the Greek Patriarchate recovered the site in 1623, and have held it ever since. There was a major restoration and rebuilding in 1840. Many of the priceless manuscripts at the Greek Patriarchate at Jerusalem are from Mâr Saba.

But this is going ahead. Let us pick up our footsore traveller, who has just arrived at Mâr Saba and sees a great ridge towering high over an open valley, whose rock faces are pierced by innumerable grottos, once the abode of monks and hermits. The monastery comes into view as a striking medley of disparate buildings, clinging to the side of a steep ravine, and girt by a great wall which makes the monastery also a fort to be held against the marauding Bedouin, Christendom's outpost in the world of Islam.

No one may be in sight, yet a porter soon appears, and unatches a small iron door. Steps lead down to the tomb of St Sabas; to the north lies a chapel of St Nicholas which appears to have been the first oratory of the monastic establishment, and the tradition obtains that St Sabas himself called this chapel the church of God's creation. Another tale of the earliest days tells how when water was desperately short the saint noticed a wild ass pawing the ground at a particular place. They dug there, water welled up, and water there is to this day. In a nearby building is a grim reminder of heroic ages, for you are shown the skulls of monks slain by Persians and Arabs on and off from the seventh century to the middle ages. Opposite the tomb of St Sabas is a large church which dates from 500 A.D. but was considerably restored and rebuilt in the seventeenth century. Then we must remember the alm-tree, reputedly planted by St Sabas (the East too has its tree as the West had St Dominic's orange tree). We may then emerge upon a little terrace which looks from a height of three

hundred feet over a desolate valley. Five miles eastwards is the famous site of the Judæan scrolls; and ten miles north-east lies Jericho.

There remains the cell of St John Damascene to be seen: last but by no means least, for this brings back to mind the amazing story of this high Christian official in the Court of the Damascus Caliphate, who played such a great part in the turmoil of his time. He seems to have retired to Mâr Saba in 710, perhaps when the Caliphs grew rather less liberally disposed towards their Christian subjects. The course of his life is not too easily traced, but certainly St John Damascene was made a priest by the Patriarch of Jerusalem in 726 or before. He emerged from his retreat from time to time, as when the Patriarch asked him to preach in Jerusalem against the Iconoclasts, which he did with the vigour we would expect of him.

But now he had found his true home in Mâr Saba, in its isolated quiet, with the tradition of prayer, and monastic ideals, and Christian scholarship. He owed much to those who had lived before him in this haven of peace. We know for instance of an Antiochus, a seventh-century monk of St Sabas, who wrote the *Pandectes Sacrae Scripturae*, a kind of moral theology based on scriptural texts¹. This work certainly influenced St John Damascene in the following century. And St John Damascene's great theological work, *The Fount of Knowledge*, is dedicated to a fellow monk and companion at St Sabas, one Cosmas, who became bishop of Maioumas, near Gaza on the coastal side, in 742.

St John Damascene lived on at Mâr Saba, and died in 749. A great part of his voluminous work was the fruit of peace and quiet in monastic retreat. Let us simply listen to the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Thus St John speaks to us:

(a) *On the Blessed Sacrament.*

If the word of God is living and efficient and keener than any two-edged sword (Heb. iv, 12), and the Lord did all that he pleased (Ps. cxiii, 11), if he said, Let there be light and there was light, Let there be a firmament and there was a firmament (Gen. i, 3); if the heavens were established by the word of the Lord, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth (Ps. xxxii, 6); if heaven and earth, water and fire and air and the whole glory of these, and even more if this noble creature,

¹ Migne, P.G. 89, 1431-1850.

man, were perfected by the word of the Lord; if God the Word of his own will became man and of the pure, undefiled, holy, and ever-virgin Mary, who knew not man, fashioned his flesh, can he not then make the bread his body and the wine and water his blood? He said in the beginning, Let the earth bring forth grass (Gen. i, 11), and even until this present day, when the rain comes it brings forth its proper fruits, urged on and empowered by the divine command. God said, 'This is my body', and 'This is my blood', and 'Do this in remembrance of me'. And so it is at his omnipotent command until he come: for it was in this sense that he said 'Until he come'; and the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit becomes through invocation (*epiclesis*) the rain to this new tillage. (P.G. 94, 1140-41.)

(b) *On Our Lady.*

Joachim then took to wife that admirable and praiseworthy woman, Anna. But just as the earlier Anna (1 Sam. i, 2) who was barren, bore Samuel by prayer and by promise, so also this Anna by supplication and promise from God bore the Mother of God, that in this too she might not be outstripped by those renowned mothers of old. Accordingly, it was Grace ('Anna' means grace) that bore the Lady: (for she became true Lady of all creaturehood in becoming Mother of the Creator). . . . Then, planted in the house of God and increased by the Spirit, like a fruitful olive tree, she became the home of every virtue, turning her mind away from every secular and carnal desire. Thus she kept her soul as well as her body virginal, as was right for her who was to receive God into her bosom; for he is holy, he finds an abode with the holy. And so, she strove after holiness and was declared a holy and wonderful temple fit for the most high God. (P.G. 94, 1157-1160.)

(c) *On the Prayer of Christ.*

Prayer is the upraising of the mind to God or a petitioning of God for what is fitting. How, then, did it happen that our Lord offered up prayer at the raising of Lazarus, and at the hour of his passion? For his holy mind was in no need either of any upraising towards God, since it had been once and for all united in substance with God the Word; nor did it need any

petitioning of God. For Christ is one. But it was because he appropriated to himself our personality and took our impress upon himself, and became an exemplar for us, and taught us to ask of God and strain towards him, and guided us through his own holy mind in the way that leads up to God. For just as he endured the passion, achieving for our sakes a triumph over it, so also he offered up prayer, guiding us, as I said, in the way that leads up to God, and 'fulfilling all righteousness' (Matt. iii, 15) on our behalf, as he said to John the Baptist, and reconciling us to his Father and honouring him as the beginning and cause, and proving that he is anything but enemy of God. (P.G. 94, 1089-1092.)

(d) *The Cross.*

Every action, therefore, and every miracle-work of Christ is immense, divine and marvellous: but the most marvellous of all is his precious cross. Only the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ has subdued death, expiated the sin of the first parent, despoiled Hades, bestowed the resurrection, granted the power to us of contemning the present and even death itself, prepared the return to our former blessedness, opened the gates of Paradise, given our nature a seat at the right hand of God, and made us the children and heirs of God. For by the cross all things have been made right. 'So many of us', the Apostle says, 'as were baptized into Christ, were baptized into his death, and as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.' Further, 'Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.' See, the death of Christ, that is, the cross, clothed with the subsistent wisdom and power of God. And the power of God is the word of the cross, either because God's might, that is, the victory over death, has been revealed to us by it, or because, just as the four extremities of the cross are fast bound by the centre bolt, so also, by God's power the height and the depth, the length and the breadth, that is, every creature visible and invisible, is maintained. (P.G. 94, 1128-29.)

(e) *Sitting at the Right Hand of God.*

We hold that Christ sits in the body at the right hand of God the Father, but we do not hold that the right hand of the Father is an actual place. For how could he that is uncircum-

scribed have a right hand limited by place? Right hands and left hands belong to what is circumscribed. But we understand the right hand of the Father to be the glory and honour of the godhead in which the Son of God, who existed as God before the ages, and is of like essence to the Father, and in the end became flesh, has a seat in the body, his flesh being glorified too. For he along with his flesh is adored with one adoration by all creation. (P.G. 94, 1104.)

It is often said that St John Damascene's writings lack originality, that they are simply a concatenation of passages from previous writers, an anthology of citations from Scripture and the Fathers of previous centuries. This is largely true, but we need other impressions to get the true measure of this great lover of God. His hymns or sacred songs are rich in scriptural and doctrinal content, and at the same time they show that this thoughtful saint could sing with fire and enthusiasm and vigorous fulness the wonderful ways of God.

Even a literal rendering² can show something of these impressive songs. Here is part of an Easter hymn (the original is rhythmical rather than metrical):

Resurrection day! Come, folks, in splendour.
It is the Lord's pasch; the pasch, I say!
From death to life, from earth to heaven
Christ, true God, has drawn us,
While we sing of triumphs.
Cleanse we every sense, and behold Christ
Gleaming in resurrection-light inaccessible.
Rejoice, and hark to every word he speaks
While we sing of triumphs.

Rightly may heavens rejoice and earth make merry.
May all the universe, seen and unseen,
Keep high festival: for Christ is risen again,
Rapture of joy unending.

Come let us drink a new drink, not drawn
By wonder-work from rock, rather from immortality's

² The virtuosity of a Ronald Knox would be needed to translate into the corresponding English *genre*.

Fount flowing from the tomb of Christ—
In whom is all our strength.

All now is bathed in light, be it heaven or earth, or
Things of earth. Let every creature feast the raising
Of Christ—who is strength of each and all.

Yesterday I was buried with thee, O Christ.
Today I am raised by thy rising.
Yesterday, I with thee was crucified.
Today, glorify me in thy kingdom!

* * *

O Sion, cast thy eyes around thee:
See, they come, luminaries divinely bright
From the West, from the North, from sea, from the East,
Thy children, blessing Christ within thee, for ever.

Father, Lord of all, Word and Spirit, one Nature
In three Persons. More-than-substance and God supreme;
In thy name are we baptized, and we bless thee
For ever and ever.

Light of Light come upon thee, O New Jerusalem,
For the glory of the Lord has risen over thee.
Leap with joy now O Sion; and be thou,
Holy Mother of God, full gladdened in the rising of thy Son.

O that divine, brotherly most sweet voice of thine, O Jesus!
Who hast truly promised to be with us to the end of time:
So cling we, full of faith, to hope our anchor, and rejoice.

O mighty pasch and most holy, O Christ,
Wisdom and Word of God and Power,
Grant that we may more and more exactly mirror thee
In thy kingdom's endless day.

(P.G. 96, 840-844.)

HIS WILL IS OUR PEACE

B. M. FREDERICK

THE Benedictine maxim *Pax inter spinas*—Peace among thorns—is applicable to everyone who is trying to live the life of the spirit, but whereas the peace is supernatural and due to the indwelling of God in our souls, the thorns chafe the unspiritual parts of us, and because they are painful or irritating we are often more conscious of pricks than of peace. Our Lord warned us that following him entails many things which are hard to nature, but he also said that if we took up his yoke we would find rest to our souls, and the over-all pattern of the spiritual life as depicted in the New Testament is undoubtedly one of eager service and of joy. It could not well be otherwise, for the following of Christ is nothing less than the doing of God's will, and all our true happiness is grounded in union with him. The working out of this destiny is our most important occupation. It should also be our happiest occupation, for his will is our peace and the more fully and generously we co-operate with his designs, the more fully will spiritual joy infuse our souls: gloom and dejection are never the work of the Holy Ghost. In everyday affairs we all realize that nothing worth-while is achieved without effort and that, though our natural gifts and inclinations will lead us along those paths which God sees are best suited to our service of him, we still need training or practice to become proficient in them. No one person can become adept in all branches of knowledge and handicraft; nor does God expect it, but there is one science it is our paramount duty and privilege to master. It is the science of holiness.

We have, on the average, very academic and misleading ideas of what sanctity means and many of those ideas are unattractive. Pietistic lives of saints which lay undue emphasis on dehumanized personalities and phenomena, and the somewhat daunting descriptions of the spiritual life in the mystical classics and some modern books, tend to set holiness apart from everyday life and to persuade us that we, being very ordinary mortals, must not aspire too high. Such reading may, indeed, disastrously sap our courage; for if we see the spiritual life stretching ahead in

terms of desolation, unceasing struggle and grim endurance we shall hardly find heart to take the first step. But we must learn to walk before we can run and to do God's will in small things before attempting the greater, and maybe if we tormented ourselves less over detachment from creatures, forced acts of the will, dark nights, acquired and infused contemplation and all those other technical terms and descriptions which make the spiritual life sound so complicated and alarming, the emptied spaces of our minds would be filled with the personal inspirations of the Holy Ghost, who alone can tell us how best to love and serve God. We may find it difficult to believe, but the hallmark of the spiritual life is holy simplicity. It can be summed up in six words: 'Thy will, not mine, be done'.

In theory it may require arduous training to submit our wills to God, and the difficulties attendant on this life-long occupation can sound very discouraging, but our business is with the present moment, not with the future, and it is only when we try to look too far ahead that our imaginations outrun our courage. We must remember too that almost all the great spiritual guides wrote for religious, men and women whose lives were deliberately ordered to allow for the greatest possible union with God and whose circumstances were very different from our own. The tempo of life itself was slower in those times, and few people living in the world (or even in religious houses) today can hope to emulate the long devotional and ascetic practices recommended by the mediaeval writers. True, it is essential to realize that certain dispositions and practices are necessary; there must be at least the desire to love God and the willingness to discard whatever hinders our approach to him; but we must learn to live in the present, giving him as gladly as possible what he asks for here and now, day by day, and avoiding all anxiety about the future. His will is our peace and, conversely, our peace lies in doing his will. Everyone who sincerely tries to live by the spirit endeavours to do God's will at all times, but we feel we cannot always see clearly what it is, and there are long hours in each day when we are occupied in earning a living or in attending to duties which seem to separate us from him. We are too inclined to associate the spiritual life with prayer and devotional reading and an earnest endeavour to improve; we fret because we cannot give more time to it and do not make obvious

and more rapid progress; we perturb ourselves by imagining trials that lie ahead or which may never come to pass, and we invent ways of pleasing our Lord while overlooking the very opportunities he gives us for doing so. All this gives rise to anxiety and restlessness, those twin hindrances to the spiritual life, and when anxiety and restlessness enter the soul they form a barrier against that peace which our Lord promised to give us. We cannot be responsive to his gentle touch if we hold our souls in a state of tension. 'The best work is done by minds at peace in a tranquillity of order. Where all is a sign of interrogation, if not of contradiction, there can be nothing settled, and where there is nothing settled we have neither the time nor the energy nor the disposition to create; there is a wound in the spirit, a sensitive sore, which prevents the mind from going about its proper business' (Martin D'Arcy, s.j., *Nature of Belief*).

The proper business of the mind is to know truth, and in this particular matter we cannot do better than lay up in our minds the many, many scriptural passages which assure us that God's will is our peace: they will do much to stabilize us, and also to give us some adequate conception of his omnipotence. He deigns to call himself our Father and elder brother and friend, but he is also infinite in all perfections and the greater and more wonderful and more beautiful we apprehend him to be, the more we realize our utter dependence on him, the more absolute trust we place in him. We are made to know truth and to love goodness and nothing less than supreme truth and goodness, which is God, can satisfy the innate craving of our souls.

Our Lord, as we read time and again in the gospel, was content to take people as he found them and to lead them on, and the fact that we stand low in the spiritual life at present is no excuse for inertia. We may be very sure that the least desire to do his will at all times will call down upon our heads the grace necessary to do so. The first step is proverbially the hardest. but once we realize that we need to show more generosity towards him, we can find unlimited opportunities for committing everything into his hands; the first step in the spiritual life is that of learning, or even of wanting to learn, to make God the centre of our lives. Not only the first step, but every successive step, for even if we become great saints the whole process of our sanctification will lie precisely in

loving our Lord, God, more than ourselves. Most of us are only too well aware of our mediocrity, and though we deplore it, we find it exceptionally difficult to get out of the rut we have worn for ourselves. The rut itself may be the result of earlier fervour; we formed good habits of prayer and have kept them up, we set out to master our passions and seldom fall into grave or even deliberate venial sin. We cannot whole-heartedly accuse ourselves of tepidity, for that means self-satisfaction, and our trouble lies in knowing we fall woefully short in our service of God. It is not so much that we are reluctant to serve him (indeed there may be nothing we desire more) but opportunities seem lacking. Hope that is deferred afflicts the soul, and our apparent inability to do anything worth-while for God breeds discouragement, which in turn gives rise to restlessness and anxiety and pre-occupation with ourselves. And if we are pre-occupied with ourselves, we cannot be attentive to God.

Still, this difficulty is very real and we all suffer from it at one time or another. One day follows another, all set in much the same pattern, work and leisure, petty vexations and small pleasures, the scanty triumphs grace has won and our innumerable failures to co-operate with it. True, when our Lord makes us like himself, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, or heaps a treasure of joy upon our heads we are responsive; here, indeed, is something to lift us out of ourselves and, whether under a crushing load of sorrow or on the crest of a wave of joyful gratitude, we are different people; no longer mediocre but alive. But sooner or later the undertow of everyday life drags us back and we find ourselves, if not in our original rut, at least in one very similar to it. We may think in all humility that when God manifests his will in unmistakable terms we rise to the occasion; but life cannot be an unending succession of crises, and it is the dead level of daily existence that saps our spiritual vitality. Yet it is the dead level of daily existence which offers us our best and ever-present means of advancement in his service. There is a widespread idea that our service of God is confined to recognizably religious matters. This, if true, would spell a bleak outlook for most of us. But the idea itself is mistaken. The essential interior act of religion is that of giving ourselves to God, not merely at certain times or in certain circumstances, but at every moment of every day.

We are all ruled by his loving providence and we on our side must lovingly co-operate with his plans and, seeing his will in all things, great and small, must learn unselfishly to prefer it to our own, not in any drab spirit of resignation or self-abnegation, but as a continuous act of generosity. For love always wants to *give*. Shakespeare's words are true of the spiritual as well as of the temporal life: 'A merry heart goes all the way, but a sad one tires a mile-a'. God loves a cheerful giver, and it is by asking the Holy Ghost to increase his gifts of supernatural peace and joy in our souls that we shall best be enabled to serve him with a cheerful countenance. It is idle to pretend we can always serve God with felt joy. Only too often our duties are repugnant and dispiriting; we have our ups and downs of health and spirits, but even so it is essential to realize that it is in these very circumstances that God reveals his will to us at the present moment. Many of our discouragements arise from taking a too restricted view of serving him; we think there is something definitely religious in laying aside a book in order to give food and drink to a beggar, but if our own hungry and thirsty children interrupt our reading it is nothing more than a common and irritating item of domestic life. Again, we feel we are working for God if we instruct a convert in the use of the rosary, but we do not consider it a similar spiritual work of mercy to teach the same thing to our own children. That, of course, is merely part of the daily round and common task. But given the simple intention of doing God's will at all times, everything we offer him is valuable in his sight, everything furthers our union with him. There may not be anything noticeably spiritual in washing up dishes or driving a lorry or watching a football match, but it is all part of God's fore-ordained plan and we cannot reflect too often or too vividly that everything is ordered for our good and his greater glory.

It is a human impossibility to think of God all day long. But when we are doing something for a person who is very dear to us, love-in-action informs the occupation. There may be no conscious thought of the person for whom we are doing it, but at the back of our minds there is an inchoate, abiding awareness 'this is for her' (or for him). What is done with love is usually done well; we put our hearts into it, we take pains and, regretful that our handiwork is less perfect than we would wish, we yet have confidence that our friend will accept it as the expression of our love;

the best we could offer. No doubt saints and other advanced souls spend their whole lives in a similar state of love-in-action towards our Lord, and we lesser mortals can at least endeavour to make our lives, humdrum and disappointing and unworthy as they may seem, a perpetual gift to God. We indeed have much to deplore, but our Lord knows that we are only tyros and will look at the intention rather than at the finished product and in his own way perfect our feeble efforts. We have only the present moment to give him: the past is already in his hands, with or without our willing co-operation, and the future is not yet ours to give him: each fleeting moment reveals his will for us and we have only to do what we believe he requires of us to live in complete union with him. Here and now we have what God in his inscrutable wisdom knows is best for us; it may indeed require high courage and generosity to trust him when we cannot fathom his designs, but it is just this exercise of fortitude and unselfishness which is implicit in our daily prayer, 'Thy will be done'. We must be on the alert, we must ask for guidance; faced with alternative courses of action we must choose which seems best and then, if we find after all that we have made a mistake, we must try to understand that the mistake itself formed part of God's plan for leading us to him. In the strict sense of the words nothing can ever go wrong, for everything that does in fact happen is part of God's over-ruling providence. We have free-will, yes; we can choose good or evil, but in some unfathomable way God's will rules over all creation and even our sins are used by him to bring good out of evil. Our finite minds cannot grasp this great mystery of religion, but it should surely afford us wonderful comfort and security and a sense of marvelling awe to reflect that everything we do accords with God's will towards us. 'We can choose what we want and within limits what we shall do, but we cannot choose the consequences of what we do, nor can we prevent any action of ours—even our rebellion—from being used by God to his glory; we can only prevent it from being used to our glory too' (Sheed, *Theology and Saints*, p. 124).

Every moment of every day we are making this choice, and if we commit ourselves into his hands, refer our lives to him, do what we believe to be right at all times, we have no cause for worry. We can forget ourselves and live for and in him, peacefully and joyously. 'There is nothing so simple as the spiritual life', wrote

Abbot Chapman to one of his correspondents. 'It has no difficulties, no troubles—these are in the lower, unspiritual part of us. You belong to God. Let that union be your real life . . . have confidence in it. It is God's work, not yours, so don't interfere with it or look at it more than you can help. . . . Abandonment to divine providence, humility, charity, these are virtues: anxieties, self-dissections, wondering what God means, wanting to know if we are progressing, these are very nearly vices. God . . . is bringing you to himself in his own way, not yours' (G. Chapman, *Spiritual Letters*, p. 178). It can all be summed up in that lovely psalm-verse, 'Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.' The words at first reading may hide their true significance, for we are too accustomed to powerful street lighting, blinding car headlights and broad highways to appreciate the restricted rays of a primitive lamp shining on a rough track. That did, quite literally, show the traveller where to put first one foot and then the other. There was no possibility of his seeing what lay ahead, for that was shrouded in darkness; all his faculties were intent on proceeding step by step in the little pool of light which guided his steps and which alone prevented him from losing his way—and perhaps his life too. Our Lord, the light of the world, will never leave us to walk in darkness if we faithfully follow him, but we must remember his reiterated counsel to live in the present moment, not taking undue thought for the morrow or allowing our hearts to be troubled with fear for the future; or yet disturbed by what belongs to the past. Our happiness lies within the little orbit of the light he sheds on our path from one moment to the next. If we are intent on this divine illumination, our hearts and minds will necessarily be occupied with him, not with ourselves: and, walking in his very footsteps, we shall learn to understand ever more fully that his will is indeed our peace; the peace he promised, which surpasseth all understanding and which is an everlasting peace.

HOLY ABANDONMENT¹

BARBARA DENT

ST ALPHONSUS said, 'Lord, I am poor, but I give thee as much as I can; having resigned to thee my will, I have nothing more to offer thee.'

To give the will unreservedly, in generous love, to God, is to give him all. The wise man said, 'My son, give me thy heart', but before the heart can be given, the will must choose to give it, for the will is always the prime mover. In yielding it to God one seeks deliberately to negate the effects of the fall, and ally oneself with the creator's original plan for mankind. One shoots an arrow back into Paradise, with a string attached to it that leads one, as Theseus in the maze, through all the intricacies of life straight to union with God.

Christ, to redeem the disobedience of Adam, became himself obedient unto death, and if we identify ourselves with this obedience of the second Adam, we partake of his merits and pass, by means of the pathway of the cross, from earth to heaven. The essence of what makes a man a human being is his free will. To present this essence to God, in loving docility and trust, is to give him the meaning of one's manhood, and to restore the integrity that was part of man's soul before Eden was lost.

All things exist in accordance with God's will. In order to permit man to be what he is, a creature of free will, God works within these confines to bring about the ultimate good of all things. His will is the good will, and to unite oneself with it is to be identified with absolute good, with that all-perceptive intelligence which penetrates behind appearances that deceive the limited human mind, to the eternal realities and the true meanings.

The way of holy abandonment is the way of complete submission to this will, and it leads unerringly to sanctity—for the divine will is holy, and that which is possessed by it is likewise filled with its holiness. Thus the spiritual life is reduced to a marvellous simplicity. Self-abandonment to divine providence has been called the short cut to sanctity, and the saints have

¹ This article is to form part of a book shortly to be published by the Bloomsbury Publishing Co., London.

proved that it is so. Based on unquestioning love of God and audacious trust in his fatherly care, it results in humble acceptance, from moment to moment, of all that he sends.

God chooses—the soul accepts. That is the core of holy abandonment. ‘Not my will, but thine, be done. . . . Let it be unto me according to thy word. . . . What wouldst thou have me do, Lord? . . . Into thy hands I commend my spirit. . . . Yea, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. . . . Thou art my God, my fate is in thy hands. . . . Fear not—it is I. . . . Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. . . . In thee will I trust. . . . To do thy will, O my God, is all my desire. . . .’

These are the attitudes, the cries, the prayers, the comforts, of the self-abandoned soul.

God knows all. God ordains or permits all that happens. The essence of God is love. Hence all that happens to us is an expression of his love. To seek and clasp this love, to believe and trust in it, throughout every event in life, is the way of the self-abandoned soul.

It sees divine providence as a river, in which it lies relaxed in tranquil love, allowing the flow to bear it wherever it will. Or like the vast ocean itself, crossed and recrossed by tidal ebb and flow and the huge, swirling movements of the mighty currents—and the soul gives itself, like a piece of driftwood, to this constant motion, borne here and there at the will of the waters.

It can be seen that this entails a marvellous docility, meekness and pliability on the part of the soul. It must submit to being tossed in contrary currents, heaved about in storms, cast on strange shores and left apparently forgotten till some high tide washes it away again, exposed to all extremes of temperature, and borne this way and that at the whim of the waves so that all sense of direction is lost.

‘Whatever is for my good God will send me, and whatever comes to me God has sent me for my good’, says the soul.

It was that perfect abandonment of Christ’s will to divine providence that led him into a way of trials, agony, humiliation, darkness, loneliness, death and *apparent* defeat. Out of all this, because it was the perfection of a will obedient unto death, God contrived the salvation of the world. Outward appearances of failure and of being forsaken by God are no true indication of the divine work, that is being perpetrated through this very tragedy

of circumstances that the self-abandoned soul permits God to visit upon it.

The way of holy abandonment is the way of trust—usually in a darkness that encompasses bitter trial after bitter trial of faith. ‘Lord, I believe—help thou my unbelief’, becomes the cry of such a soul on whom God casts his ‘cloud of unknowing’, involving it in apparently senseless contradictions, defeats and inconsistencies. One day he appears to cherish and console it, the next to abuse and forsake it. One moment it is certain it is pleasing to him, and the next it is as if he had turned away his face forever.

It has to become like Thérèse, who contented herself with being the child Jesus’ ball that he could throw away and forget, toss about as he pleased, kick or embrace—and still it always remained his possession, dumb, unresisting, content to be merely whatever and wherever his whim dictated.

So the self-abandoned soul accepts uncomplainingly what look like the whims of divine providence. It does not fret itself to understand the mysteries of God’s ways, but in faith and love blindly believes that they are the ways of absolute goodness and perfect charity. ‘God’s will hath no why’—and so this soul does not torment itself asking ‘Why?’ but says simply, ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord’. It never pauses to calculate the cost, to bargain, to reserve prudently certain things for itself, to make a trading centre of the temple of love.

All problems are simplified, because they are all contained in one—loving submission to God’s will as each moment reveals it to the receptive soul.

Jesus said to St Catherine of Siena, ‘Think of me, and I will think of thee’, and so the soul in this state forgets itself in adoring the divine will.

However, this is anything but a state of inactivity as far as the practice of virtue is entailed. The self-abandoned soul exercises all virtues. It practises patience, detachment, meekness, humility, trust, just by waiting, in poverty of spirit, until God sends it what he wants it to have. Whatever this is, and although the heart cries out at the loneliness, deprivations and sufferings, the will remains at peace, accepting all as from his hand, and therefore as a disguised blessing. After all, was not our Lord’s divinity hidden within his human flesh? To the abandoned soul all is grace. With St Thérèse it can say, ‘I always have my own way’, because

its way is God's way, and it moves with each of his movements, and makes none of its own.

St Francis de Sales's well-known maxim, 'Desire nothing, ask nothing, refuse nothing', is not meant to be applicable to the practice of the virtues. 'It is always better to have no desire, but to hold ourselves ready to do whatsoever obedience may demand of us', he says, but he makes it clear that we are to desire the very summits of virtue. His counsel inevitably implies, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and the rest shall be added unto you'.

That it is added, is proved by the spiritual joy of the saints, and their reiterations that they find perfect peace in whatever it is that God has ordained for them.

This apparent passivity conceals an unyielding and constant activity—the keeping of the will steadily afloat in the current of God's will, the firm checking of every impulse to edge towards some sheltered cove or to dally peacefully in a quiet backwater, or to exchange the hazards of the wide, ever-moving ocean where courage and watchfulness are constantly needed, for the deceptive torpor of some lagoon or harbour where there appear to be no dangers, and no superhuman efforts are required.

To abandon oneself completely one thus needs to exercise all the virtues, beginning, continuing and ending, with an heroic degree of charity.

Consider St Bernadette in the quiet, uneventful years at St Gildard, beset by interior and exterior trials, and finally existing in physical torture from hour to hour, uncomplaining, docile, full of charity, completely abandoned. 'My soul, rejoice at having one trait of similarity with Jesus, to remain hidden in helplessness'. She who considered herself just a broom the Blessed Virgin had used for a while, and then put back in its place hidden behind the door, suffered as a victim to save souls, and took all that God sent her as a sign and proof of his love. 'Oh Jesus, release all my affections and draw them upwards! Let my crucified heart sink forever into yours and bury itself in the mysterious wound made by the entry of the lance. . . . When my feelings are too strong, recall the words of our Lord: "Fear not, it is I." When despised or humiliated by my superiors or my companions, thank our Lord at once as though for a great grace.'

'Fear not, it is I.' With supreme trust that is what the abandoned soul reminds itself in all trials and terrors. It sees Christ walking

on the tempestuous waters, and affirms that here is the master of the universe and of all the elements, allowing them their hour of play, but all the while manipulating them to his own ends. 'Trust me; let me work', he is saying, and whatever its fear and repugnance on the natural level, on the supernatural level the soul, in faith, allows the elements (which are himself disguised) to have their way with it.

Such a soul also develops an heroic degree of detachment. 'I accept before it happens whatever will be the outcome of this work' is its attitude before undertaking any work for God. Then it does all that it can to co-operate with the will of God as it appears to be manifesting itself, and leaves the results in his hands.

However, this by no means ensures a merciful inability to feel pain, or to recoil in horror from what God ordains. Even our Lord endured such feelings in the garden of Gethsemane—but at no time did his will make any movement of rebellion against the divine will.

St Francis de Sales says, 'Let us not be concerned about what we feel or do not feel. Nor must we imagine that in these states of indifference and abandonment we shall never have desires contrary to the will of God, or that our nature will not feel a repugnance to the events ordained by his good pleasure, for such involuntary sentiments shall often occur. The virtues dwell in the superior part of the soul. The inferior part commonly remains outside their influence. We must make no account of this; but without paying any heed to its desires and in spite of its remonstrances, let us embrace the will of God and unite ourselves thereto.'

Thus we must detach ourselves not only from the results of our labours, but from all emotions that rise up contrary to the direction of our God-centred will. This conflict between the feelings and the will is one of the most terrible to endure, and God provokes it again and again in the soul, that it may learn non-attachment to all things.

This detachment through renunciation of self-will is a progressive affair. Once God recognizes the desire of the will to be immersed in his, he sets about training it, as it were. It must become so docile that it relinquishes immediately an apparent good it has just been given, if God so desires it. 'The Lord has given, and the Lord has taken away—blessed be the name of the Lord.' When it can say this tranquilly in the face of the cruellest

deprivations and contradictions that God sends, then it is perfect in detachment and renunciation. St Thérèse reached this perfection near the end of her life, when she could say, 'All is grace'.

To the perfectly self-abandoned soul, all *is* grace. Its holy indifference is such that it clings to nothing but God, and desires nothing but God, and God gives it its desire.

As Schryvers says in *The Gift of Oneself*, 'She lives in the plenitude of her God, who gives her all that she is able to take, at every moment of the day. She has nothing more to desire. She is like a vase which the ocean has filled.'

This description perfectly fits St Thérèse, who, having given herself as a victim of divine love, withdrew nothing. Her gift had been absolute, and her acceptance of what followed was unconditional. Her sufferings were very great, but so was her peace and her bliss. Only those who love God exorbitantly are capable of such complete self-surrender, and of the continued acts of self-renunciation that must follow, day by day, in all manner of things, great and small, for the rest of one's life. Such poverty of spirit means that all has been given irrevocably to God, nothing is retained for self, and no merit is ever ascribed to self.

This generosity in loving blesses, praises and thanks him for everything, and adores him with the unquestioning trust of a tiny child at its mother's breast. In response, he pours his graces into the soul, and this state of reciprocal love, and union of wills, produces an inner peace such as the world can never give, a sense of completion that no human love can bestow, and the perfect liberty of those who live and move and have their being in God.

As Caussade, that master of the doctrine of self-abandonment, says, 'O holy detachment! It is this that makes room for God. O purity, O blessed annihilation, O submission without reserve! This is what attracts God into the depth of the heart. . . . Not a single moment of my life is of my own ordering; all belongs to thee, I have neither to add nor subtract, to enquire or reflect! Sanctity, perfection, salvation, direction, mortification, is all thy affair, Lord. Mine to be content with thee and to choose for myself no action or condition, but to leave all to thy good pleasure. . . .

'God instructs the heart, not by means of ideas, but by pains and contradictions. The science of this state is a practical knowledge by which one tastes God as the sole good. In order to possess it,

we have to be disentangled from all particular goods, and to reach that state of disentanglement we have to be really deprived of them. Thus, it is only through a continual self-contradiction and a long series of all kinds of mortifications, trials and strippings that one can be established in the state of pure love. We have to arrive at the point at which the whole created universe no longer exists, and God is everything.'



BL. ANTHONY NEYROT, O.P., MARTYR
(10 April 1460)

WALTER GUMBLEY, O.P.

THE story of Bl. Anthony's capture by pirates, of his apostasy, recantation and glorious death, comes to us from two very trustworthy witnesses who both knew the saint. One was his fellow-captive and an eye-witness of his martyrdom, the other was the Dominican provincial in Sicily, from where Anthony had sailed to imprisonment and death. The first of these was a Jeronymite hermit, Fr Constantius of Capri, who had been carried captive to Tunis some considerable time before the arrival of Anthony. Shortly after the latter's martyrdom on 10 April 1460 he wrote a long account of all that had happened to him, and sent it to the Dominicans in Sicily, whose provincial, Fr Peter Ranzano, had welcomed Anthony to the island three years before. Fr Ranzano embodied this account in a letter he wrote to Pope Pius II, and added details of his own which he had evidently learned from the Genoese traders in Tunis on their visits to Sicily. Later writers have embellished the story of Anthony without adding to its dramatic value or historical accuracy, and we can safely neglect them.¹

From Fr Ranzano's statement that Anthony was a man of about thirty-five, as far as he could judge, when he left Sicily in 1458, we can place his birth somewhere about the year 1423.

1 One of them, perhaps, deserves mention. This was John Lopez, O.P.; born in 1524, he was made a bishop at the age of 71, resigned when he was 84, and spent the next twenty-four years writing a history of the Order in four volumes. He died in 1632, at the age of 108.

His birthplace was Rivoli in Piedmont, but he was invariably described as a Lombard, as were most Northern Italians in the fifteenth century. Some time between 1439 and 1444 he was clothed with the habit of the Dominican order in the Florentine convent of San Marco by St Antoninus, who was prior between those two dates. According to some later writers, he wished to travel to Sicily and other distant places in order to exercise his powers as a preacher, and this despite the warnings St Antoninus gave him of the grave perils to both body and soul that he would encounter on such an enterprise.

At any rate he arrived in Sicily in 1457, and giving Fr Ranzano the provincial convincing reasons for his journey, was well received by him and allowed to remain in the island. He lived there as a reasonably good religious for a year, and then another fit of wander-lust seized him and he begged leave to go to Naples, and on from there to Rome. He said he hoped the Master General would assign him some quiet retreat in which he could end his days, declaring in an exaggerated fashion that he had travelled far and wide both East and West, and was now worn out. This at thirty-five! The provincial, himself only thirty-one, had already summed up Anthony as a lazy and dissatisfied man. But he let him have his way, and off Anthony set for Naples, only to fall on his third day at sea, 2 August 1458, into the hands of a noted corsair, a renegade Christian called Nardo Anequino. This man brought his living cargo to Tunis, and landed them there on 9 August. Fastening ropes round their necks, he paraded them through the city according to custom, and then consigned them all to prison.

Here Anthony was sought out and assisted by the good-hearted Jeronymite priest, who heard his confession and tried to cheer him up. But although, as this same Fr Constantius assures us, prison life was not too oppressive, and responsible prisoners were often allowed out on *parole*, Anthony made little show of bearing his cross, and complained so bitterly of his sufferings that his benefactor grew not a little shocked at his impatience and continual querulousness. Anthony wrote several letters to the Genoese consul, Clemente Cicero, begging him to get him released, but in so importunate and unreasonable a tone that the official refused to have anything to do with him. Fr John Novaro, however, a Dominican who was chaplain to the Genoese mer-

chants in Tunis, succeeded in getting him to change his mind and promise to help the miserable prisoner. Cicero was as good as his word, defraying the prison dues out of his own pocket, and obtaining Anthony's conditional release on the plea that he was a Genoese and as such illegally captured and detained, since Genoa and Tunis were politically friendly. The term Genoese was loosely employed by the consul to include Lombards, and, as we have said, Anthony was reckoned as such. His discharge was not made absolute until Cicero's government should have confirmed the claim he had made, and meanwhile Anthony was hospitably received by Fr Novaro in his little house in the Genoese quarter. Here was situated the colony's chapel, dedicated to St Lawrence, in which Anthony could celebrate mass.

In these circumstances the future martyr lived for five months, but in the same depressed condition of mind, continually bewailing his hard lot. Then to the horror and dismay of Fr Constantius and all the Christians in the city he openly embraced the Moslem religion, and publicly denied Christ and all his teachings. What led him to this atrocious crime we cannot say. Fr Constantius set it down to diabolic suggestion consequent on his loss of faith, but Fr Ranzano tells us that he had been slandered by a priest who went round accusing him of various misdemeanours. After bearing with this petty persecution for a time, Anthony in sheer temper and malice abjured his faith. He became an inveterate enemy of the truth, and Constantius informs us that he set himself to spread his new creed by translating the Koran into Italian. But as he proceeded with this work he was stricken with remorse, and his eyes were suddenly opened to the dreadfulness of his crime. This account is endorsed by Fr Ranzano, but a later tradition held that St Antoninus, who had died about six months before, on 2 May 1459, appeared to the unfortunate man and urged him to repent. This story is mentioned in the process of canonization of St Antoninus by a witness called Fr Michael Christophorus, who testified in 1516, when he was eighty-three, that he had received the story from one Fr Baptista who had been clothed by the saint at the same time as Bl. Anthony.

Anthony made his recantation publicly before the king of Tunis, but not until he had spent more than six months in secret penance. The first thing he did was to dismiss the wife he had been forced to take by law. Then as far as he could, he led a

severe life of penance, but privately so as not to arouse suspicion among the Moslems. His reason for this secrecy was that he wanted to make his recantation as public as his apostasy had been, and the king would be absent from Tunis until the beginning of April 1460. On his return Anthony appeared before him wearing a scapular lent him by Fr Novaro over his civil dress. It was Palm Sunday, 6 April 1460, and denouncing the Moslem faith as impious, he urged the king to accept the faith of Christ. The king, not surprisingly, was very angry, and sent him back to prison, to be brought the next day before the *cadi* or judge and condemned as an apostate Moslem to be publicly stoned to death. The sentence was carried out on Maundy Thursday, 10 April, with great brutality; but before the executioners stripped him of his clothes, he begged a bystander of his charity to carry back his scapular to Fr Novaro. Then he willingly offered himself to death. A vain attempt was made to burn his body, which was eventually thrown into a sewer. It was retrieved by the Genoese, and as money talked as eloquently in the fifteenth century as it does today, they were allowed to bury it in the colony's chapel. It was translated nine years later to his shrine at Ripoli. His cult was confirmed in 1767 by Clement XIII.



THE APOCRYPHAL LETTER OF KING ABGAR OF EDESSA TO JESUS

Translated by JOSEPH BOURKE, O.P.

A legend, once extremely widespread and influential both in the Eastern and Western Churches, relates that Abgar V, king of Edessa 4 B.C. to 58 A.D.) once exchanged messages with our Lord. Two main versions of Abgar's letter and our Lord's reply have been preserved: the first in Eusebius' History of the Church, the second in the fourth-century Syriac document known as the Doctrine of Addai. It is from the latter that my translation is taken. Addai, so the legend goes, was the disciple sent to King Abgar at Edessa after the Ascension, in fulfilment of our Lord's promise. Edessa was from a very early date the centre of Syriac-speaking Christianity, and it was thither that St

Ephraem transferred his school in 363, when Nisibis, his native town, fell into the hands of the Persians. Even by that time the legend must already have been well established. It is valuable, not of course as an historical record, for it is completely apocryphal, but as a very early witness to the spirit of direct and simple piety which is characteristic of the best traditions of Syriac Christianity.

ABGAR would have liked to make the journey to Palestine in person, and to see with his own eyes all the things that Christ was doing. But he could not travel to a territory of the Romans other than his own, lest this should provide an occasion for the malice of his enemies. For this reason he wrote a letter, and sent it to Christ by the hand of Hannan, the scribe. Hannan left Edessa on the fourteenth of March, and arrived at Jerusalem on the twelfth of April, in four weeks. Having found Christ at the house of Gamaliel, a great man among the Jews, he read the letter before him. This is what it said:

Abgar the Black, to Jesus the good healer, who has appeared in the country of Jerusalem. Greetings, my Lord!

I have heard of you and of your healing; how you heal, not by medicines or by herbs, but by your word you make the blind to see, the lame to walk, lepers to become clean, the deaf to hear, and unclean spirits to depart. By your word you heal lunatics from the spirits which torment them. The dead, too, you raise to life. Hearing these great wonders which you work, I have made up my mind that you are either God, come down from heaven to perform these things, or else the Son of God, since you are doing all this. Therefore I have written to ask you to come to me here, for I adore you. Whatever illness I am suffering from, you will cure, as I believe in you. Besides, I have heard this too: that the Jews are murmuring against you and persecuting you—that they even seek to crucify you, and watch for opportunities to injure you. Now I have a city which is small, but it is beautiful, and it would be large enough for the two of us to live quietly here.

When Jesus had received this letter at the house of the chief priest of the Jews, he said to Hannon, the scribe:

Go and take this message to your master who sent you to me:

Blessed are you who, when you had not seen me, believed in me. For it is written of me that those who see me will not believe in

me, while those who do not see me will believe in me. As to what you have written to me about coming to you there, the work for which I was sent hither is now accomplished, and I will ascend to my Father who sent me. When I do ascend to him I will send you one of my disciples to heal you, and whatever illness you are suffering from, he shall cure. And all those who are with you he shall convert to everlasting life. And your city shall be blessed; no enemy shall ever again gain possession of it. While Jesus was saying all this to him, Hannan the scribe was watching him. And with his skill as the king's painter, he set to and painted a likeness of Jesus, in superb colours. This he took back with him to King Abgar his master. And when King Abgar saw the portrait, he received it with great delight, and set it in a place of high honour in his palace. Then Hannan the scribe related to him all the things he had heard from Jesus.



'I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVETH'
(JOB XIX, 25)

From St Gregory's Commentary on Job, Bk XIV

Translated by E.H.

BY saying redeemer, not creator, he is clearly announcing one who appeared amongst us in the flesh, long after he had created all things, in order to redeem us from captivity, one who delivered us by his sufferings from never-ending death. And notice with what strong faith in the power of Christ's godhead he pulls himself together; just as St Paul says: 'Even though he was crucified through weakness, yet he lives through the power of God' (2 Cor. xiii, 4), so Job says here: 'I know that my redeemer lives', as much as to say, more openly, 'Any unbeliever can know about his being scourged, laughed at, knocked about, crowned with a crown of thorns, smeared with spittle, crucified, and dead; but I believe with the certainty of faith and I freely and openly declare that he lives after death. For my redeemer lives, whom the hands of wicked men slew.'

But now, blessed Job, would you please openly declare what confidence the resurrection of his body gives you in the resurrection of your own? It goes on, 'And on the last day I am going to rise from the earth'; for the simple reason that our Lord is one day going to perform the same resurrection in us as he has displayed in himself, because the limbs of the body must succeed eventually to the glory of their head. Our redeemer then underwent death so that we should not be afraid to die, and he displayed his resurrection so that we should be confident that we shall rise too. That is why he did not wish his death to last longer than three days, in case resurrection deferred in him should mean all hope of resurrection killed in us.

The prophet puts it about him very well in the psalm, 'He drinks of the torrent by the wayside, therefore shall he lift up his head' (Ps. cix, 7). He was graciously pleased to drink as it were from the river of our sufferings, but by the wayside and not in a permanent abode, because he experienced death in passing, for a mere three days, and was certainly not destined as we are to abide permanently in the death he experienced until the end of the world. His resurrection then on the third day displays what his body the Church is one day to attain to. Meanwhile here are we, destined by the death of our bodies to remain in the dust till the end of the world, while he blossomed again from withered death on the third day, thus giving us a demonstration of his divine power in so renewing his own flesh.

This is well illustrated by Moses in the story of the twelve rods placed in the tabernacle (Num. xvii). When people began showing contempt for Aaron's priesthood, and doubting whether the tribe of Levi which he belonged to was fit to offer the sacrifices, Moses had twelve rods placed in the tabernacle, one for each tribe; and lo and behold Levi's rod blossomed, thus displaying the efficacy of Aaron's office. Now what does this sign mean, if not that all of us, who are to lie in death till the world's end, remain dead withered sticks like the eleven other rods; while Levi's rod flowered again because the body of our Lord, who is our true high priest, after lying briefly in withered death, burst forth again in flowering resurrection? The flowering rod proved Aaron to be the right priest; and the glory of his resurrection shows that our redeemer, who sprang from the tribes of Juda and Levi, is our true mediator and interceder. We have then

good grounds for hoping in our eventual resurrection when we consider the actual glory of our head.

But when some people consider that death undoes the spirit from the flesh, that the flesh turns to mould and the mould breaks down to dust and the dust is resolved into such fine particles as to be practically invisible, they lose hope in there being any possibility of resurrection. One look at some dry bones, and they just cannot believe that such things will ever be clothed again with flesh and burst once more into life. Well, if they cannot keep their faith in the resurrection out of obedience, they surely ought to do so on grounds of reason. After all, what is the world doing every day but copying our resurrection in its own elements? In the course of the seasons we see the trees lose their green leaves and stop producing their fruit; and then lo and behold quite suddenly we notice a sort of resurrection happening in the dry withered branches, leaves unfurling, fruit growing, the whole tree being clothed in renascent splendour. We are continually seeing the tiny seeds of trees committed to the juices of the soil; and from them we see large trees rising up not long after, and producing leaves and berries. Let us consider then one of these tiny seeds, and let us grasp if we can, where in the space of so exiguous a seed has this enormous tree that sprang from it been hiding. Where was the wood, the bark, the green leaves, the ripe fruit? Was all this, I ask you, to be seen in the seed while it lay in the soil? And yet thanks to the hidden skill of the craftsman who arranges all things wonderfully, the roughness of the bark was latent in the softness of the seed, the solid trunk hidden in its tenderness, the juicy fruits in its dryness. Why should it be thought surprising then that he who constructs enormous trees out of the minutest seeds should refashion a man when he wishes to out of the minutest particles of dust?

So I believe then that I am to rise again, but I still want to hear in what form. Is it to be perhaps in some other fine or airy body, or in the same body that I die in? But if I rise in an airy body, it will not in fact be I who rise. Indeed, it cannot be properly called resurrection where it is not what fell that rises. But it is for you, blessed Job, to take away these clouds of doubt. Since you have begun, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, to speak to us about our hope of resurrection, tell us openly if it is really this flesh of ours which is going to rise again.

He goes on, 'And once more I will be fitted into my skin'. The mention of skin takes away all doubt about the reality of the resurrection. This doubt was felt by Eutychius, Bishop of Constantinople, who wrote that our bodies in the glory of the resurrection will be intangible, much finer and more tenuous than the wind or the air. Now indeed our bodies will have a quality of fineness in the glory of the resurrection by virtue of their spiritual power; but they will also be solidly tangible because of their genuine bodily nature. That is why our redeemer showed his disciples his hands and side when they were doubtful about his resurrection; why he gave them his flesh and bone to feel, as he said himself, 'Touch and see that a ghost does not have flesh and bone, as you see that I have' (Luke xxiv, 39).

I pointed out this evidence of the gospel to Eutychius when I met him in Constantinople,¹ and he said: 'The Lord did this to clear the disciples' minds of doubt about the resurrection; he had a tangible body when he showed it to them, but after their minds had been reassured by touching him, every touchable quality in the Lord was resolved into some intangible fineness'. To this I replied, 'It is written, "Christ rising from the dead dies now no more, death will lord it over him no longer" (Rom. vi, 9). But if anything in his body could be altered after his resurrection, it means that the Lord returned to death after rising from it, contrary to the truth stated by Paul.' Then he raised this objection: 'Since it is written "that flesh and blood cannot possess the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. xv, 50), on what grounds can you believe that the flesh really rises?' 'In the sacred text', I said, 'the word flesh sometimes has a physical sense, sometimes a moral one implying fault and corruption. Thus in the physical sense you have "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John i, 14); in the moral sense, implying fault, take this instance, St Paul saying to his converts, "But you are not in the flesh but in the spirit" (Rom. viii, 9). So when he also says that flesh and blood cannot possess the kingdom of God, he wants you to understand flesh in the moral sense, not in the physical. He makes this clear by going on "nor will corruption possess incorruption". So the glory of the heavenly kingdom will be enjoyed by the flesh in the physical sense of this word, but not by the flesh as meaning the

¹ Gregory had been papal apocrisiary or nuncio there for some years before his own election as Pope.

lusts and passions, because it will be reigning in everlasting incorruption, once the sting has been taken out of death.'

Eutychius answered that be that as it may, he still denied the possibility of the body rising again in tangible form, and he stated his views in a pamphlet. Our protracted controversy over the matter became so serious that there was every likelihood of an open rupture between us. Then the Emperor Tiberius Constantine of pious memory sent privately for us both, and asked what the quarrel between us was about. He heard the arguments of either side, and refuted Eutychius' pamphlet on the resurrection by arguments of his own, and decided that it ought to be consigned to the flames. No sooner had we left his presence than I was seized by a serious illness and Eutychius by a fatal one. When he was dead I refrained from pursuing the matter further, since practically nobody accepted his views. But while he was still alive, and I was in the grip of a violent fever, some of my friends used to visit him, and they told me that he would hold up the skin of his hand before their eyes and say, 'I confess that we will all rise again in this flesh'.



GAMALIEL

We have great pleasure in introducing Gamaliel to our readers, to answer, as far as he can, any questions they may wish to put on matters of doctrine, Bible, liturgy, prayer, morals. We hope that he will be answering readers' questions regularly, if not perhaps quite every month, from now on. All questions that are not answered in our pages will receive a personal reply. The identity of questioners will be concealed under fictitious names, initials, or soubriquets. Questions should be addressed to Gamaliel, c/o the Editor, THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, Rugeley, Staffs.

Q. I have always been baffled by a homily of St Ambrose, in the Dominican breviary, on one of the gospels for a feast of many martyrs; the gospel is the beatitudes from Luke vi. St Ambrose compares St Luke's four beatitudes with St Matthew's eight, and says that the latter in his eight 'has unlocked a mystical number.

For many psalms are written *pro octava*: and you receive the command to give a part to those eight, perhaps blessings. For just as *octava* is the perfection of our hope, so *octava* is the sum of virtues.' What *does* this mean? As far as I am concerned, the mystical number is locked up more securely than ever.

O.P.

A. The Benedictine editors of St Ambrose's works agree with you that 'a more than Cimmerian darkness enshrouds this passage'. Let us take it piecemeal.

(a) 'Many psalms are written *pro octava*.' He is referring to the titles of some of the psalms, e.g. Ps. vi, whose title, as Ambrose's version would have had it, runs: 'To the end, in songs, a psalm of David, for the octave'. This last phrase was possibly some musical rubric. Ambrose probably interpreted it as meaning, mystically, 'for the eighth day'.

(b) 'The command to give a part to those eight, perhaps blessings.' He is alluding to Ecclesiastes xi, 2. The whole passage runs: 'Cast your bread on the surface of the water, because after many days you will find it. Give a part to seven, and indeed to eight, because you do not know what evil there will be on the earth.' What the Preacher is actually saying, according to some commentators, is: 'Be ready to take risks, but don't put all your eggs in one basket'. Ambrose tentatively interprets him as saying mystically: 'Live up to the eight beatitudes'; *fortasse benedictionibus* should be translated 'perhaps beatitudes'.

(c) The conclusion, 'For just as *octava* is the perfection of our hope, so *octava* is the sum of virtue'. Ambrose is in a tradition that goes right back to the New Testament (see 1 Peter iii, 20, 2 Peter ii, 5 for oblique allusions to it), when he interprets the number 8, and especially the eighth day, as standing for the resurrection, for the consummation of all things, for eternity. The reason is not far to seek; our Lord rose from the dead on the first day of the week, which is also the eighth because it fulfils the seventh day sabbath of the old dispensation. St Ambrose then seems to be saying something like this: 'It is generally agreed that 8 stands for our hope of resurrection; hence those psalms written "for the eighth day" (the psalms were assumed to be nearly all written in the name of Christ). But 8 also has a mystical moral significance, exemplified obscurely by Ecclesiastes and plainly by St Matthew.

It stands for the perfection of virtues whose practice will bring us to the perfection of our hope, namely to the resurrection.'

Q. A friend of mine who is totally blind complains to me every year when October devotions come round, that for a whole month they prevent her from *hearing* mass. Since we have been continually encouraged by Rome to take an active part in the mass, there would seem to be a contradiction here. Is there in fact any reasonable answer to my friend's objection against the public recitation of the rosary during mass? I am told there has been some recent pronouncement about simultaneous offices. Is that so?

PASTOR PERPLEXUS

A. It would seem that in this matter a genuine conflict of laws has come about. First in the field were Pope Leo XIII's encyclicals on the rosary. The Pope prescribed that the rosary and the complementary prayers of the devotions were to be recited during October at benediction. Wherever the blessed Sacrament was not reserved, or for other good reasons could not be exposed for veneration, the rosary and prayers were to be recited at mass. We should remember that in those days evening services were very much better attended, and that the Pope was providing for the recitation of these prayers at mass instead of at benediction very much as an exceptional arrangement. It seems unlikely that he ever envisaged its occurrence on a Sunday or a holiday of obligation.

His zeal for the rosary has been emulated by his successors, not least by Pius XII. But the late Pope also went further than any of his predecessors in promoting the active participation of the faithful in the mass. None the less Leo XIII's prescriptions were not modified, and there is no denying that the situation has been growing increasingly anomalous; especially as the decline in attendance at benediction has made the recitation of October devotions at mass more the rule, if anything, than the exception.

But it seems quite clear that this anomaly has now been removed by the instruction of the Sacred Congregation of Rites on sacred music and liturgy, which was issued in September 1958 as almost one of the last pontifical acts of Pius XII. Para. 12 of this document says plainly: 'It is not lawful to mix liturgical services and public

devotions one with the other; but if there is any reason for it, public devotions may precede or follow liturgical services' (Fr Clifford Howell's translation).

As far as I can see then, the holding of October devotions during mass is from now on to be regarded as an abuse, and your friend would have the right, perhaps even the duty, of complaining about it to the proper authorities.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

SOME REFLECTIONS ON MARRIAGE

The Editor,

THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT.

DEAR EDITOR,

Several months ago (I have given the issue away, so don't have it to check the date) your magazine had an article—a very good one—on the similarities between divine love and human love. The last line, however, to the effect that the pleasures of divine intimacy were not usually the lot of those to whom God gave the pleasures of conjugal love, somewhat bothered me. And even though it finally occurred to me that, after all, it is not primarily pleasure that we seek in the service of God, still it seems that there was an aspect of the question left unexplored.

For the participation of human love in divine love is not limited to the reflection that human love bears to the divine in its own nature. To the extent that human love results from, and is ruled by the love of God, it participates this divine love as it is in itself, even as it is in God, in God the Father, and God the Son, spirating God the Holy Spirit. And to this very love whence, *ad intra*, proceeds the Holy Ghost and whence, *ad extra*, we ourselves proceed as creatures in the image of the Son by way of Love, parents are united when by an act of love—of God and of each other in God, overflowing to their children—they bring forth children in their own God-imprinted image. And when procreative love is thus united to the creative love of God, so that it bears not only a natural but also a supernatural similitude to the

trinitarian act of creation, the second of time in which conception takes place participates most intimately in that divine love which is from all eternity. And so, just as creation does not begin and end with that second in which creatures come into being in their own natures, but rather, as partaking of the Creator's own eternity, exists from all eternity in the mind of God, in the Word who expresses that mind and who is thus our exemplar, and includes, besides this pre-existence from eternity, also that providential care which accomplishes our return to our source and end; so does procreation also have some participation in this same divine, eternal solicitude. This is not only in the self-giving and care for the beloved which is the condition of that sexual love which is ordered to procreation, and in which children already somehow are, as the flower is in the seed, but also in the greater self-sacrifice which must characterize the months of waiting for birth; and then, with birth, this second of natural procreation, in which we shared God's natural creation, stretches into years of supernatural re-creation in which we become, daily, the cause of our children's sanctification in grace. For as he who is from all eternity the exemplar of our humanity became, in time, one of us, that so we might become him, even his own body, and so that, as the mystical body of Christ, vivified by that Spirit which breathes into us the very life of God himself, we might be even yet the sons of God, nor is it revealed what we shall become; so also in the family, we who are one in body are even more intimately one in the body of Christ, and we who have life by the same blood, are more closely bound together in the trinitarian life we share by the blood of Christ. For it is in the providential plan of God that we should be members of each other as we are members of Christ, and although God could have effected his purposes without the intermediary of secondary causes, he has nevertheless chosen to make use of these, that the dignity of causality may be imparted to creatures. And so the divine generosity which gave us a share in that divine creation whence creatures proceed from God, gives us also a share in that re-creation, and sanctification, whereby they return to him.

And if God has chosen some to be his brides in a most special way, nevertheless, we are all, as members of the Church, espoused to the eternal bridegroom, and our conjugal union in marriage is a participation of our union with Christ; we are wedded in Christ because we are first wedded to Christ. If this is true at all, married

love is somehow born of union with Christ, even if remotely, and it is ordered to the perfection of this union, and it is here alone that it finds its own proper perfection. And to that end it has the protection, the grace of a sacrament. And as this sacramental bond is the similitude of Christ's love for his bride, the Church, so also does it have some share in the perfection of this love, so that in the beloved it is Christ who is loved. And this conjugal love is even the very love of Christ himself, and the reason why it is tender is that the love of Christ is tender, and the reason why it is jealous is that the love of Christ is jealous, and the reason why it draws us close to each other is that it draws us close to Christ. It is Christ himself who whispers in one's dearly beloved husband, 'Come, my love, my dove, my beautiful one', and the reason why the bride is beautiful, why she has the purity of a dove, why she is worthy of love, is because she is first loved by Christ, and adorned with the beauty of his grace.

I have understood very often when I have overcome the reluctance of fatigue to respond readily to the demands of conjugal love, that it was the insistent demand of the love of Christ himself that I was answering. And once it happened that under very great pressure there was danger of infidelity, so that for that and other reasons it was very difficult to be responsive, until at last I knew that I could no longer continue to give of myself; and in that moment I understood very, very clearly that it was no longer I who was making the sacrifice of love, because I was not capable of it, but Christ who was making it in me, to avert the danger of evil. And after that, the continued sacrifice became infinitely sweet and infinitely precious, so that I was very, very reluctant to relinquish it when circumstances made it no longer necessary.

But if God has given this understanding in times of adversity, it has also been granted in times of more care-free pleasure, when I wondered if there must not be something not quite right about a love given so gladly, and so generously, to a man; and the eternal bridegroom himself gave me to understand that it was a love given to Christ, because it was given to one loved in Christ. And at such times he has given me graces of prayer as pure as any ever granted in solitary moments, kneeling before the tabernacle.

It is necessary, I think, to bear in mind the fact that the difficulties concerned with sexual love, and with the married state,

derive rather from the weakness of our fallen nature than from a *per se* imperfection in that love itself, which as a natural similitude of divine love has a certain natural disposition to be supernaturalized in grace. Even if the wound of original sin has made us weak, yet what is impossible to man is possible to God. The fact that the married state is not as perfect a state as that of virginity must not blind us to the fact that nevertheless it does have a perfection which is proper to it, and that by it God leads many souls to sanctity, and sanctity is union with himself. Nor is God prevented from manifesting his infinite mercy and condescension in the gifts he gives to those whom he has placed in a lowly state for that very purpose. Most particularly, it is necessary to understand that the perfection which is proper to the married state bears an intimate relation to the perfection of that procreative love whereby parents share even in the trinitarian love in God, whence from eternity proceeds that Love who is reflected in every other love. And the pleasures of human love should in no way detract from the joys of divine love, but should ever more perfectly participate the intimacy of divine love itself.

Sincerely in Christ,

A MARRIED WOMAN

NOTICES

The Supplement to *La Vie Spirituelle* for the first quarter of 1959 has two excellent articles on contemporary tendencies in religion. The first, by the Dutch Dominican H. Schillebeeckx, sees the modern 'existential' restlessness and its positive expression in the liturgical, ecumenical, and biblical movements that are stirring in the Church, as constituting the crowning success of the effort of renewal, which began with the Counter-Reformation and yet was at the same time partially stunted by the Counter-Reformation's natural but excessive anti-Protestant pre-occupations. The second article is by the Spanish Dominican V. Forcada, and gives a picture of the many-sided vitality of Spanish Catholicism today, that will probably surprise our conventional English ideas on the subject, still invincibly dominated as they are by Sir Francis Drake. Fr Forcada contributed an article on much the same lines to our Irish contemporary *Doctrine and Life* last August.

The latest pamphlet in the *Tell Me Father* series (St Paul Publications) is *Tell Me Father About Hell*, by Dermot Murray. It is good contemporary apologetics, cast in the form of a correspondence between a priest and a young man doing his national service. It costs 1s. 6d.

The *Instruction on Sacred Music and Liturgy*, issued last September by the Congregation of Rites, has now been published by Herder, price 2s. 6d., in a translation by Clifford Howell, S.J. One of its prescriptions is referred to elsewhere in this issue.

REVIEWS

THE SUNDAY SERMONS OF THE GREAT FATHERS. Translated and edited by M. F. Toal. 4 vols. (Longmans.)

This collection is published in four volumes, corresponding to the liturgical divisions of the year. It appears both in a large *format* for libraries and in a pocket edition. The pocket edition is most attractively produced; it has markers, the paper is fine, the print, though small, is extremely clear. For each Sunday the gospel, and parallel passages, are laid out and followed by extracts from the *Catena Aurea* of St Thomas; this in turn is followed by two, or usually more, sermons of the Fathers. We are told that this work contains 'what is in effect the spiritual inheritance of every Christian'—the Sunday gospels themselves together with the traditional interpretation and teaching of the Fathers, 'in authority and influence second only to the Apostles and Evangelists themselves'. It is stated that the author's purpose has been to serve the needs particularly of the busy priest, who will here find 'placed in his easiest possible reach this treasure house of sacred lore, this quintessence of the doctrine of tradition. . . . A sermon well prepared on the matter here supplied cannot fail to be learned, solid, simple and effective.' (Foreword.) Alas! any effectiveness will be due rather to the qualities of the preacher than to the material as here presented to him. The reason for this lies in the actual translation. It does indeed seem accurate, as one would expect, and also perfectly clear; it is, however, dull, lifeless and perfectly uninspiring, belonging to a *genre* which one had hoped was of the past. As such, it does not have the power to implant in the reader the strength and life which it really possesses. It is not only what the Fathers said, but the way in which they said it, the zeal and vigour with which they spoke, that gives to us the full content of their thought. It cannot be maintained then that this work contains 'the spiritual inheritance of every Christian'; there is a vital aspect missing, and what could have been a most delightful and valuable work, is instead a doubtful quantity.

G.H.

MUHAMMAD AND THE ISLAMIC TRADITION. By Emile Dermenghem. (Longmans; 6s.)

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE DESERT TRADITION. By Jean Steinmann. (Longmans; 6s.)

These two books are 6 and 5 respectively in the *Men of Wisdom Series* which Messrs Longmans are producing from the French. From the first of them the average reader unfamiliar with Islam will inevitably

carry away a rather blurred impression. The reduction in scale is too enormous. It might have been wiser to leave out altogether the section on Islamic Tradition, since few distinctive features can emerge from the compression of this subject into thirty-six pages. But the sketch of Muhammad and the selection of Islamic texts do offer vivid pictures to the imagination.

The wars and wives of Muhammad have often been held against him by Christian apologists who have compared him with our Lord. The comparison is not really fair. The Prophet is a thoroughly 'Old Testament' figure, his wars and wives reminiscent of David, and his prophetic experiences of a man like Elias. His character, like David's, seems to have deteriorated somewhat with success and old age, but his personal religion had the grand simplicity of both these Hebrew prototypes.

A quotation from the Qur'an and a reported saying of Muhammad's seem to put the essential difference between Islam and Christianity in a nutshell. The Prophet said, 'There is no new born child but belongs naturally to Islam. It is the parents who make it a Jew or a Christian or a Magian.' And the Qur'an says, 'Turn towards the natural religion in which God created men. God's creation cannot be changed. That is the unalterable religion.' Christianity claims to be a fulfilment and a supernatural religion; Islam to be the natural religion, a primitive reform.

The book on John the Baptist is scarcely in the same class. It rambles from the Essenes to Christian monasticism, the Jewish Karaites and Mandaicism, using the Baptist as a sort of symbolic peg, to which to tie these various reflections with the most tenuous of historical threads.

Both volumes are adorned with the excellent illustrations characteristic of this series. The calligraphic Arabic compositions of certain sacred texts are marvellous feats of ingenuity. It is interesting to observe that the contemporary Muslim holy picture, though not quite so hideously sentimental as its Catholic counterpart, is subject to similar debasing influences.

E.H.

ALL FOR THE KING'S DELIGHT. A Treatise on Religious Chastity, principally for Religious Sisters. By Ferdinand Valentine, O.P. (B. O. and W.; 21s.)

The title of this book is taken from the 44th Psalm: 'Thy beauty now is all for the king's delight; he is thy lord, and worship belongs to him.' And this is a fitting summary of the valuable study given us here. It cannot be too warmly recommended to the sisters for whom it is written. It will also serve all who are in any way involved in the

instruction and direction of such sisters. But the book has an interest and a value far beyond the immediate scope of its subject matter. It will have a use for a much wider class of readers, namely that growing number of students of the life of the spirit who will only be satisfied with the scientific and orderly approach of theology. For Fr Valentine shows quite clearly here that the theological approach is the orderly approach of life itself. St Thomas Aquinas was not merely conforming with the scholastic conventional mode of speaking of his time, but really meant it, when he said in the prologue of the *Summa Theologica*, that he was writing milk for babes, in such a way as to befit the instruction of beginners. And the solution to the problem of living a dedicated life of chastity, in our age when everywhere that virtue is the object of diabolical attack, is worked out in this treatise according to the principles of the movement of man towards God, the second part of theology. And the burden of the teaching of this volume is that the solution of the whole moral problem of our age can only be found when studied in this theological context. So just as for St Thomas there was no hard and fast division between dogma and morals, as between two subjects studied in splendid isolation, so in life there can be no hard and fast division between the mystery of the residence of the blessed Trinity in man's soul by grace, and the day-to-day struggle to live a chaste life. Indeed, such a life is pointless and frustrating without the continued effort to know, love, and serve God which is the only reason for our existence.

But this book gives us not only the objective application of theological principles to a moral problem, but also a sympathetic understanding of that problem from the subjective viewpoint of the religious sisters themselves. And the author has placed at our disposal the fruits of a lifetime of study, and experience as a retreat master over the last thirty years. Valuable suggestions are put forward and actual experiments are cited as to how to deal with the type of girl seeking admission to religious life. Running all through this treatise is the fundamental wisdom of the classical article of St Thomas on teaching, where he shows that teaching is neither a ramming in of mere information, nor yet a drawing out of innate ideas, but rather a nurturing of the vital principle of intelligence within the pupil. In the case of chastity the religious sister must be made to see that she has in her body a pearl of great price, which, caught up and dedicated in the religious habit, is thus raised together with the spotless virginity of the Mother of God, to become the instrument of the spiritual regeneration not only of her own but also of all those souls for whom she works. And just as the influence of the sacred virginity of our Lady is magnetic to draw all men towards her Son, so the influence of our religious sisters, who in a

special way share in this glory of Mary, has ever been, in the history of the Church, one of the chief ways of drawing souls to God. This apostolic aspect of chastity has been dealt with fully by Fr Valentine in a previous volume, *The Apostolate of Chastity*. In this present treatise he is concerned to help the young sister to keep faithful to her virginity in our present age when that state has been almost totally discredited. The traditional teaching of the Church, for example, that smallness of matter does not lessen guilt of mortal sin in the matter of chastity is openly laughed at as pious scrupulosity by our modern propaganda. Whereas it is a common-place of traditional Christian behaviour that such virtues as modesty and gentleness of speech and deportment are essential for the preservation of virtue, nowadays all this refinement and delicacy have been removed in the name of the realism forced upon our youth by the aftermath of two world wars. But in face of the collapse of morality, an even stronger build-up of the outer defences of chastity is necessary. So, much of what Fr Valentine has to say in this treatise is not directly concerned with chastity. In the opinion of the present reviewer he has succeeded in vindicating the traditional teaching of the Church in this lucid and most helpful book.

MATTHEW RIGNEY, O.P.

EVELYN UNDERHILL. By Margaret Cropper. (Longmans; 25s.)

A friend who read this book before me was surprised to discover that Evelyn Underhill was married, and it is true that the reading public during her lifetime created an artificial *persona*, the mask of mystic and recluse through which the oracle that was Evelyn Underhill seemed to speak. This biography, which is written with great affection and frankness by one who knew her personally during her lifetime, not only fills up this sort of gap in our knowledge but does a little to solve the puzzle that she will always be. Evelyn Underhill, besides directing retreats and writing books and letters of spiritual direction, lived a full and normal life happily married to the sweetheart of her childhood and enjoying the society of numerous friends, among whom were counted novelists and writers such as Sylvia Townsend Warner, Laurence Housman and Arthur Symonds. Yet even here there are, as there must be in anyone's biography, unanswered questions. How much did she regret the childlessness of her marriage? Was it perhaps a cross accepted with greater fortitude than we might imagine?

We shall never know and we should not pry, but it is part of the enigma that she will always remain. She is best known as the woman who helped those who could not relate religious experience to any institutional Church, and in a measure this is the pattern of her own religious life. Shortly before her marriage she spent a week with the

French Franciscan nuns at Southampton, and the day after she came away experienced what she called a conversion and had no doubt that her ultimate home would be the Catholic Church. She never became a Catholic, and the reason that is popularly accepted is that she could not bring herself to submit to the terms of the encyclical *Pascendi*. Certainly she was conscious that what she called her own modernism was an obstacle, but in her letters to Fr Robert Hugh Benson before the encyclical was published other obstacles can be seen. She did not stay the whole week at the Franciscan convent for fear of sudden submission to the Church, a submission which she saw as a sacrifice of intellectual honesty and a surrender to emotion. In addition she was considerably upset at the thought of the distress she would cause to her future husband. The fact was, too, that she did not yet believe in Christ, and it was a long time before, with the help and advice of Baron von Hügel, our Lord came to figure at all in her religious life. Another thread from the tapestry of her personality is to be found in her early letters to her fiancé. Their tone is quite remarkable: not only is the expression of her love for him entirely motherly (though there is no reason whatever to suppose that true married love was ever excluded from their relationship), but there is a determination to sacrifice her own interests for his welfare that seems almost fanatical. 'You have promised that if it really hurts to be without me, you will ask me to come home, won't you?' [All the way from Italy, that was.] . . . 'Whatever happens, I must not desert you, or put my fads before your real interests.'

These things do not make a complete picture, and there does not seem to be one. Whatever the reason, Evelyn Underhill never became a Catholic, nor did she find herself fully at ease in the Church of England. It is hard to say if she ever completely shed her modernism, though under the direction of Baron von Hügel her prayer became more christocentric, as she calls it. Whether she believed in the divinity of Christ is not clear. However, largely as the result of her writings, she was called upon by numerous people to help with their problems in prayer and the mystical life and it was her inborn belief in the goodness of God's creation and her conviction that creatures must be of positive assistance to us on our way to God that was such a help to these souls. Running through all this of course was a doctrine of indifferentism that is dismaying, for it poisoned much of her teaching. In isolation the parts of her teaching are generally sound and helpful; it is only when we try to co-ordinate them that we see how much they lack the stiffening of revealed truth. On looking back one feels that what put her off from the Catholic Church was not that *Pascendi* condemned what she believed, but that it condemned anything at all. She would

have nothing excluded from the kingdom of Heaven, not even cats. Paradoxically enough one is edified by the strength she gave to others, but this is because we believe the grace of God may work outside ordinary channels.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A SAINT: Thérèse of Lisieux. Translated by Ronald Knox. (The Harvill Press; 21s.)

The content of this volume has become a spiritual classic and hardly needs any comment, but it was written in French by a simple French girl. It is virtually impossible to catch the exact mood of the French in a translation, just as the language of Shakespeare cannot be translated into any other language. Mgr Knox has got as near as seems possible to the impossible. Nevertheless there are moments when inevitably he has failed. The mentality and mode of expression of this young but nevertheless great saint is so much her own and so French that it can only be captured in the original. We must, however, be very grateful to Mgr Knox for this excellent effort, especially as it gives us the full text of the original. All who are in any way interested should have this volume.

DOMINIC SIRE, O.P.

LE PÈRE JACQUES. By Michel Carrouges. (Editions du Seuil.)

The days are over when the biography of a holy person must of necessity be a chain of piously interpreted events. Here is the story of a very forceful character of our own times told with directness. Everybody did not like him—and why should they? Perhaps the characteristic of this man was his uncompromising nature and yet his essential charity in his dealings with other men. The latter part of his life was utterly selfless and surely brings home to us that sanctity is not a thing of the past and can be attained even in the most adverse circumstances: in fact was perhaps helped by the very adversity he met. As a straightforward narrative of an undoubtedly holy priest and religious it is interesting reading, especially when set in present-day or almost present-day conditions.

DOMINIC SIRE, O.P.

THE CONQUEST OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD. By John of the Angels, O.F.M., tr. by Cornelius J. Crowley. (Cross and Crown; \$3.95; Herders; 32s.)

This series of dialogues between a Franciscan religious and his spiritual director, written in the early sixteenth century, would form an excellent basis for retreat subjects, or it would be suitable for use as a meditation book for those who have put themselves in the path of

perfection. The first dialogue deals with the precept of love, and the disciple opens it by stating that, if the desire to be perfect were perfection, he would be most perfect in every kind of virtue, because he had spent all his life in good desires and intentions. Here is the common ground: but, whereas it is the exception rather than the rule for us to meet a disciple pursuing, with the same or progressive standards of integrity, the counsels of perfection until the end, here we are gripped by the possibilities of the way for those who will not give in. There is sound reading in Fray John's approach to the four entrances to the kingdom (through the passage of amendment of life), humility, self-abnegation, suffering, and the passion and death of Christ. The master takes the disciple through the inescapable paths to perfection, using simple language and simple example; a soul who wishes to find *all* must leave *all*: sound doctrine set out in the first chapters. And we are taken through to the end, where the disciple finds himself in the kingdom of God while still in the flesh, as if he had said he had so arranged the affairs of his kingdom that, although he had many cares and obligations, they did not take his attention and intention from God, who was always in his soul. A solidly helpful book.

K. J. BARTLETT

EVE AND MARY. By Peter Thomas Dehau, O.P. (Herder; 30s.)

Deeply Thomistic and highly original, this long meditation on our Lady, quaintly expressed, indifferently translated, scintillates with memorable flashes of insight. Its theme is annunciation—angels' visits, decisive and crucial, linking the chapters of the story of heaven and earth.

The fallen angel brings death to Eve, and through her to all; the angel Gabriel brings life to Mary, and through her to all. The meaning, implication, lessons, of this parallel are brought out and developed. Other annunciations, including the temptation of Christ by Satan and the (non-angelic) annunciation of sorrow to Mary at the first labour are considered, but the Eve-Mary parallel is the main theme and makes the book almost a necessity for those who seek an adequate understanding of this great patristic principle. But the book is a theological meditation rather than a thesis. Casual, conversational, sometimes rambling presentation of a hundred and one reflections, all connected with the theme, gives originality and character to what might have been a mere didactic treatment of a well-worn subject.

The place of women in the divine economy is repeatedly stressed and may be thought by some readers to be too heavily traditional and even unimaginative.

On page 141 there seems to be a printer's error (Daniel-David?), and perhaps 'salutary tears' on page 134 should be 'salutary fears'.

G. M. CORR, O.S.M.

MARTYRS: From St Stephen to John Tung. By Donald Attwater (Sheed and Ward; 16s.)

This book consists of fifty-eight accounts (varying in length from two to nine pages) of the sufferings of the martyrs, together with a short introduction and extracts from St Cyprian's *Exhortation to Martyrdom*. It is, as the author claims, a representative selection, both in time and place—a witness to the catholicity of the Church. Half of them are from pre-Reformation times, twenty of these being from the first four centuries; the other twenty-nine include eleven Reformation martyrs in England, Wales or Scotland, missionary martyrs from all quarters of the globe, and finally three victims of the persecutions of recent years. There are well-known saints such as Lawrence, Alban and Thomas of Canterbury, and unknowns like Saints Jonan and Berikjesu (martyred in Persia, 327), and Blessed Gomidas Keumurgian (Constantinople, 1707).

These accounts are both scholarly and readable; many of them are vivid and moving. But the author concentrates on the acts of martyrdom, sketching the historical background very briefly, and in consequence there is a certain sameness about them, for all their circumstantial variety. This is not a book to read straight through. Nor on the other hand is it a book of reference, like Butler. It occupies a rather undefined position, somewhere in between.

A.G.